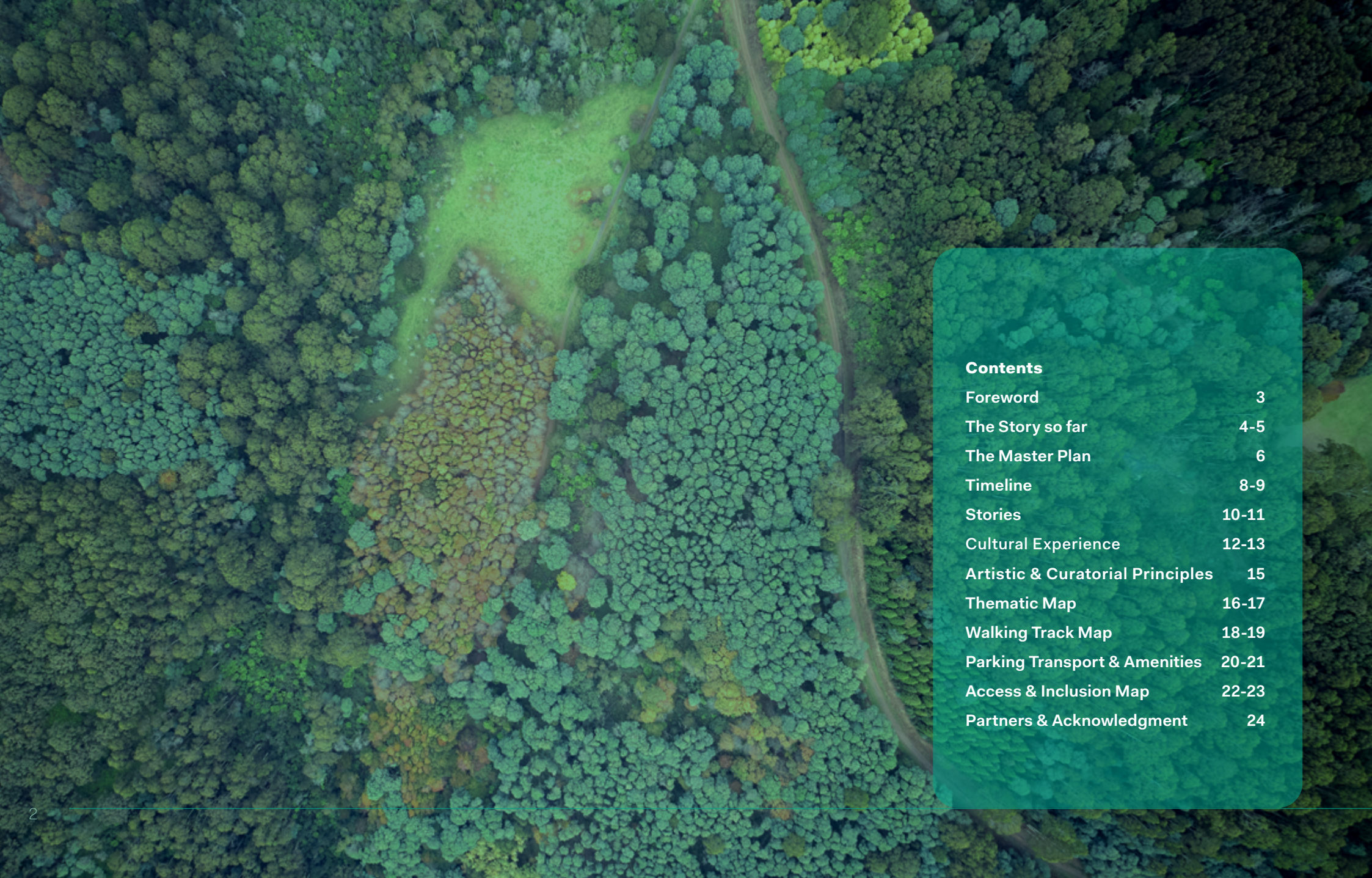




Ridge
Walk



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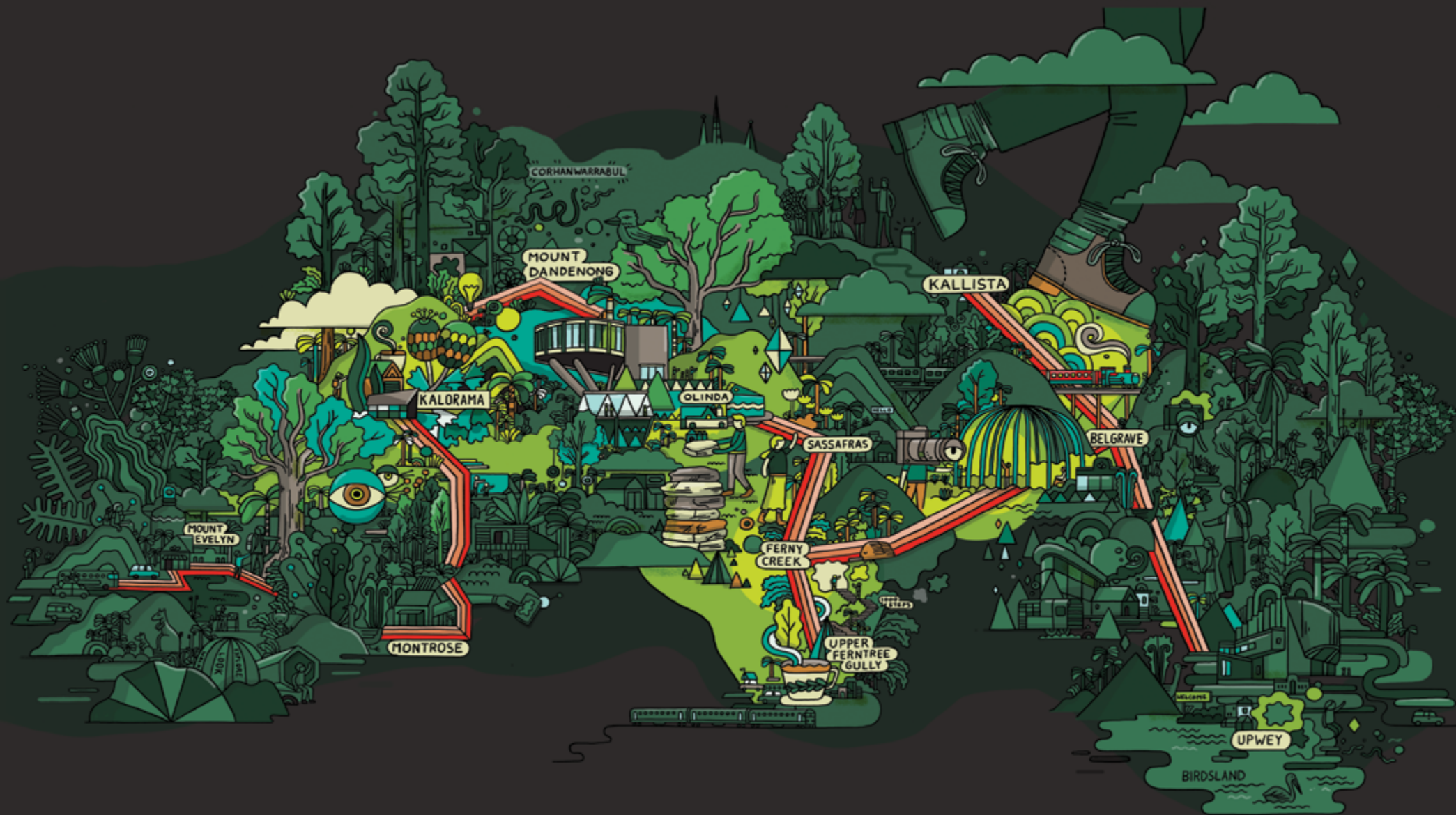
It's hard to think of any place outside of Australia's metropolitan centres with such an impressive array of creative achievement as the Dandenongs. – Bronwyn Hanna History & Heritage

Occurring across 39 kilometres of walking track, RidgeWalk invites us to explore the natural wonders, rich histories and cultural offerings of the region. The track leads through forests of towering mountain ash and rich understoreys, passes through townships and emerges to panoramic views of Melbourne. Art and interpretive content of various forms can be discovered across the track.

RidgeWalk's dynamic artistic program provides opportunities for multi-sensory, participatory and educational experiences. It also serves as a platform for ongoing exploration of creativity, history and place.

Some of Australia's most significant artists, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, have drawn inspiration from the Dandenongs, and the region continues to thrive as a creative hub. RidgeWalk examines the human relationship to place, from First Nations people's connection to Country, to shared contemporary experiences.

*We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri People as the Custodians of this land.
We pay respect to all Aboriginal Community Elders, past and present, who have resided in the area and have been an integral part of the history of this region.*



The story so far

Concept

RidgeWalk was first conceived in 2017. Yarra Ranges Council led the project in partnership with State and Federal Government, Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, Parks Victoria, local residents, artists, businesses, schools, cultural and community organisations.

Indigenous culture, the environment, heritage and creativity were the key local values identified during this early conceptual phase and they continue to underpin all subsequent project activities.

Funding

The Australian Government, Victorian State Government and Yarra Ranges Council provided \$9.8 million dollars of project funding.

The funding enables significant upgrades to existing tracks, 14 kilometres of new tracks , the installation of architectural nodes, way-finding signage and heritage interpretation – along with permanent sculpture, land art and a rotating program of temporary exhibitions and performances.

Research

Local histories and narratives inspire the creative and interpretive content of RidgeWalk. Two cultural studies, commissioned by the Yarra Ranges Council, provide the thematic foundation for the project.

The reports were produced in collaboration with Traditional Owners and local history groups.

Studies examining opportunities around transportation and economic impact were produced, along with a Cultural Heritage Management Plan and Curatorial Framework.

Engagement

Community and stakeholder engagement serve a critical role in the project's development and will continue to guide RidgeWalk into the future.

Between 2017-2019, more than 1000 community members participated in drop-in sessions, online forums, workshops and guided walks.

Additionally, project staff worked with Yarra Ranges Council's Disability Advisory Committee, Indigenous Advisory Committee and attended local environmental, business and heritage network meetings.

Master Planning

Master Planning took place between 2018 and 2019.

The process involved extensive site investigation and community engagement.

The RidgeWalk Master Plan presents a unified vision for the project and conceptual designs to guide its development.

Dandenong Ranges Cultural Study

A document outlining an illustrated history and analysis of the connection between art and land in the Dandenongs. Involved extensive input from local history groups.

2017

Economic Impact Study

The RidgeWalk economic impact study informs project planning and provides estimates of projected visitation numbers, time and money spent.

2018

Traffic, Movement and Transport Study

2019

Cultural Heritage Management Plan

A report on the potential impact of a proposed activity on local Aboriginal cultural heritage in the region.

2020

TIMELINE

2017 – Ongoing

2018 – 2019

2019

2020

Community Engagement

A diverse range of programs and opportunities for community involvement within the project's development.

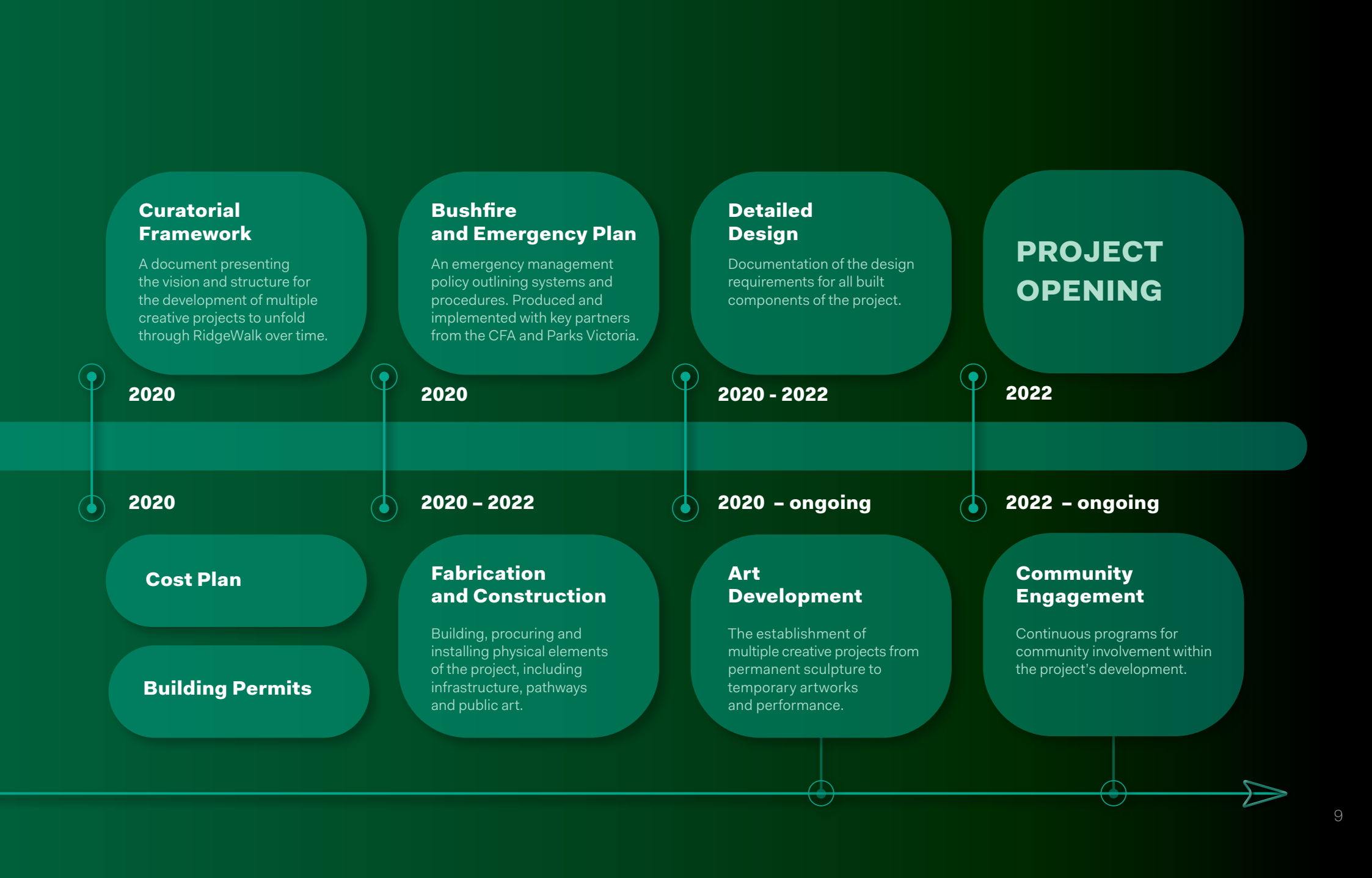
The Master Plan

A detailed plan providing instruction, inspiration and guidance for the art, design and construction of RidgeWalk.

Risk Management Plan

Aboriginal Cultural Values Report

A report of the history, culture and contributions of Aboriginal people in the Dandenong Ranges. Developed in consultation with Traditional Owners.



Stories

Given RidgeWalk's strong emphasis on narrative, two cultural studies were completed to inform the project. These studies outline the stories that will be brought to life through the project's dynamic creative program.

Ridgewalk: A History of Culture, Artists and Creativity in the Dandenong Ranges

In 2017, Yarra Ranges Council commissioned, Ridgewalk A History of Culture, Artists and Creativity in the Dandenong Ranges. The report was developed by Bronwyn Hannah History and Heritage in collaboration with local history groups.

Featuring:

- Three brief historical accounts of the Dandenong Ranges — natural history, Aboriginal history and colonial/postcolonial history
- A stand-alone illustrated catalogue with 30 entries on the life and work of locally distinguished individuals and five accounts of local creative households

Aboriginal Cultural Values Assessment Report

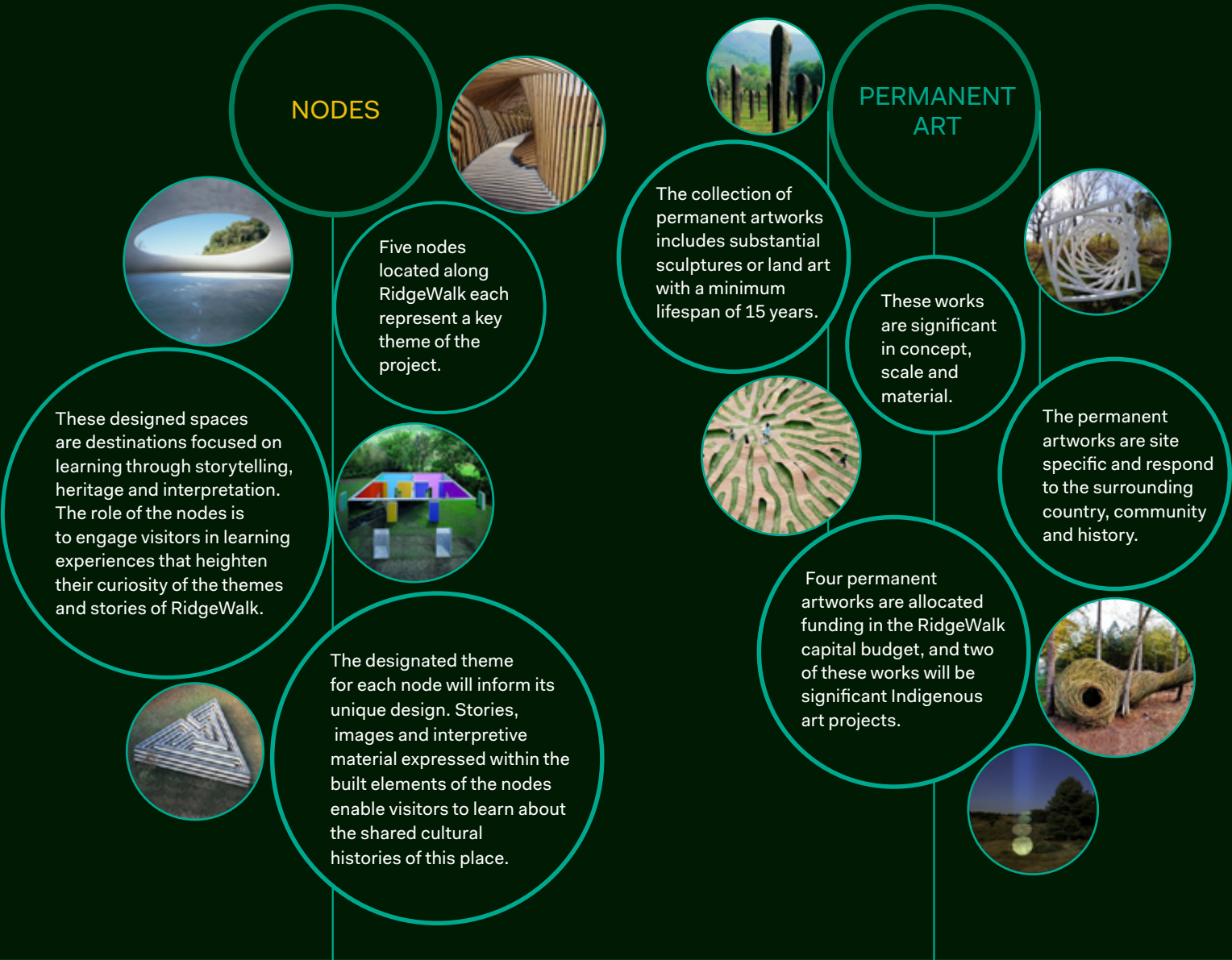
In 2019, Yarra Ranges Council worked with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, Boon Wurrung Foundation and Extent Heritage to create an Aboriginal cultural values report. The report provides a greater depth of understanding of Aboriginal culture and history in the Dandenong Ranges.

Key themes from the report:

- Contributions of significant past Elders who have been active in the Dandenong Ranges
- Importance of the mountain environment in the provision of food (kangaroo, eels, fern hearts) and commodities (lyrebird tails)
- Association of the mountains and ridges with the flow of water, travel and movement
- The tourist trade of the mid-20th century attracting Aboriginal entrepreneurs such as Bill Onus and drawing the nation's attention to Aboriginal arts and crafts
- Presence of extensive forested crown lands provided a setting for the occupation and reclamation of land by the Bunurong Land Rights Claim in the 20th century

Cultural Experience

RidgeWalk is a contemporary art experience with stories expressed through a variety of creative platforms. Art and signage will be paced along the track to provide visitors with a rich and diverse cultural encounters while preserving the natural experience.







Artistic and Curatorial Principles

Ceremony
(1898)
Barak

Pencil, wash,
ground wash,
charcoal solution,
gouache and
earth pigments
on paper

57.0 x 88.8 cm

National Gallery
of Victoria,
Melbourne

Purchased, 1962

The cultural experience of RidgeWalk is dynamic. It responds and evolves with the people who engage with it. The following principles serve as a foundation for the creative outputs of RidgeWalk. The principles are designed to reflect community values and support the realisation of the project vision.

1. Transformational

The art of RidgeWalk challenges and changes our perceptions of the natural and cultural landscapes of the Dandenong Ranges. Creative projects are designed with learning in mind, and will be experiential and exploratory.

2. Environmental

The landscape of the Dandenong Ranges is at the heart of all content. All aspects of the project reflect the deepest respect for the land and its Traditional Owners. All artwork and concepts are driven by a response to the site's historical or environmental context and the land on which they are created.

3. Culturally Respectful

All creative outputs are culturally respectful. Cultural ownership is honoured by an assurance that representation of Indigenous culture is Indigenous-led and community specific.

4. Participation

Projects are participatory and inclusive, and there are opportunities for community co-creation and co-curation. The experience for the participant is interactive, sensory and diverse. The participant moves through an experiential environment, accessing cultural content using multiple senses.

5. Dynamic

Art sites spaced along the track evolve and change over time. Projects and spaces transform to create new contemporary experiences. There is a mix of event-based, ephemeral and permanent work.

Thematic map

Light, Form & Colour

Aboriginal and European artists have depicted the Dandenong Ranges through their respective lenses. Influenced by changing cultural perceptions of the environment, they developed nationally significant artistic styles distinctive to the region. The node and artwork within this zone explores this evolving relationship between artists and the land.

Community

The Dandenong Ranges have an enduring storyline of people connecting to each other and to the land. There is also a darker history of disconnection, when First Nations people were displaced from their communities and their Country. This node and the surrounding artworks speak to the intersection of people, cultures and values in the Dandenong Ranges over time.

Resilience

The resilience of the people and the environment of the region are explored through the node and artwork in this zone. First Nations people and cultures from the Dandenong Ranges have survived despite the devastating impact of colonisation. The natural environment also endured a century of human-inflicted devastations, including pastoral clearing and deforestation. The threat of bushfires and other natural disasters continues today.

Activism

The Dandenong Ranges' long history of environmental, social and political activism informs the node and artwork in this zone. Individuals striving for a better place have been united by their love of the land, culture and a belief in the possibility of change. The Bunurong Land Rights Claim has had a lasting national impact. Save the Dandenongs League, formed in 1944, is a highly influential activist group recognised for protecting the natural assets of the region.

Country

For many First Nations people, trees are holders of memory. The presence of surviving pre-colonial trees stands as a direct link to the past. While present throughout RidgeWalk, this section of the experience focuses on nature's capacity to evoke strong feelings of connection to Country.



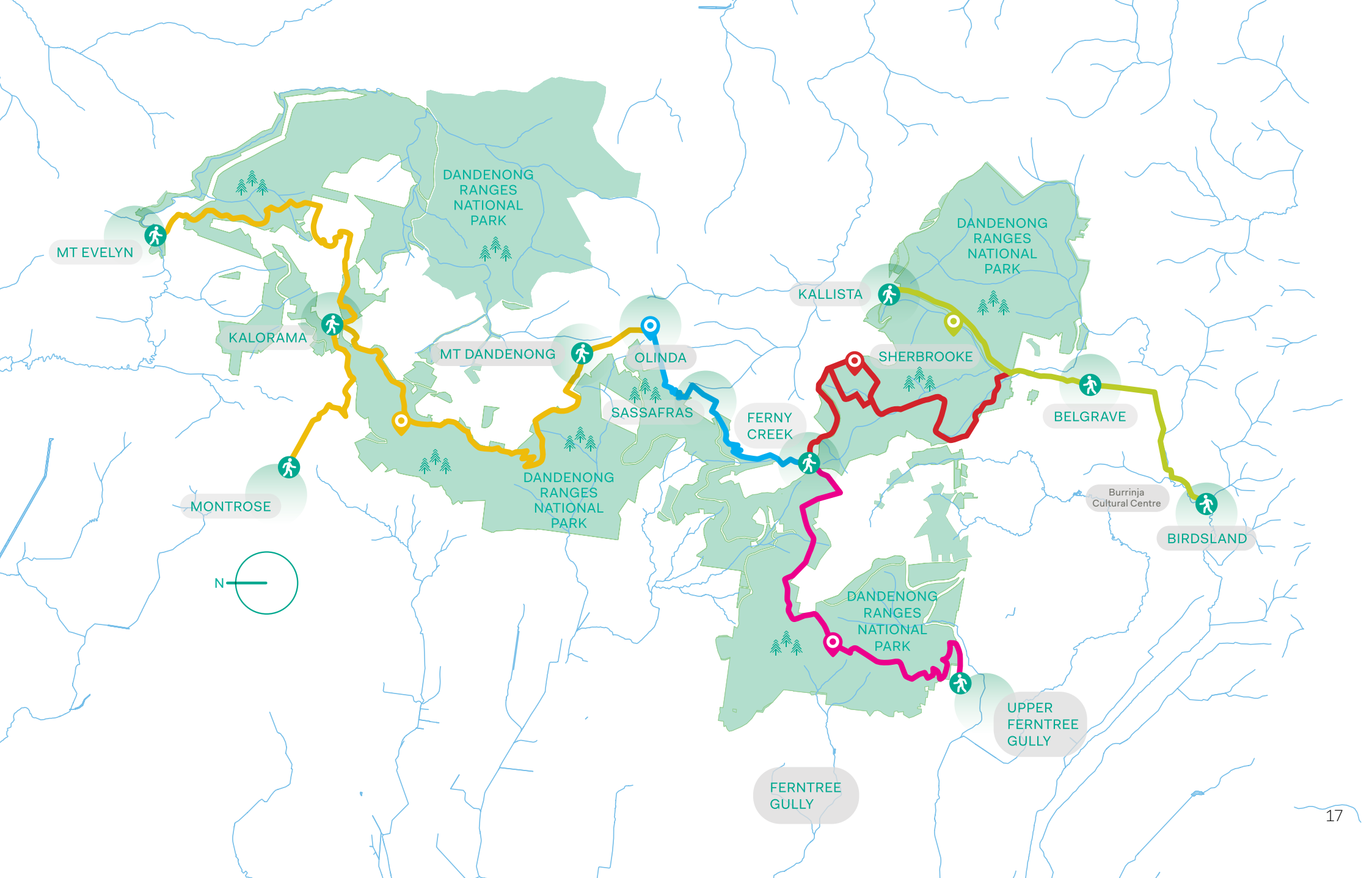
RidgeWalk entry and exit points



Walking track



Nodes








Walking Track Map

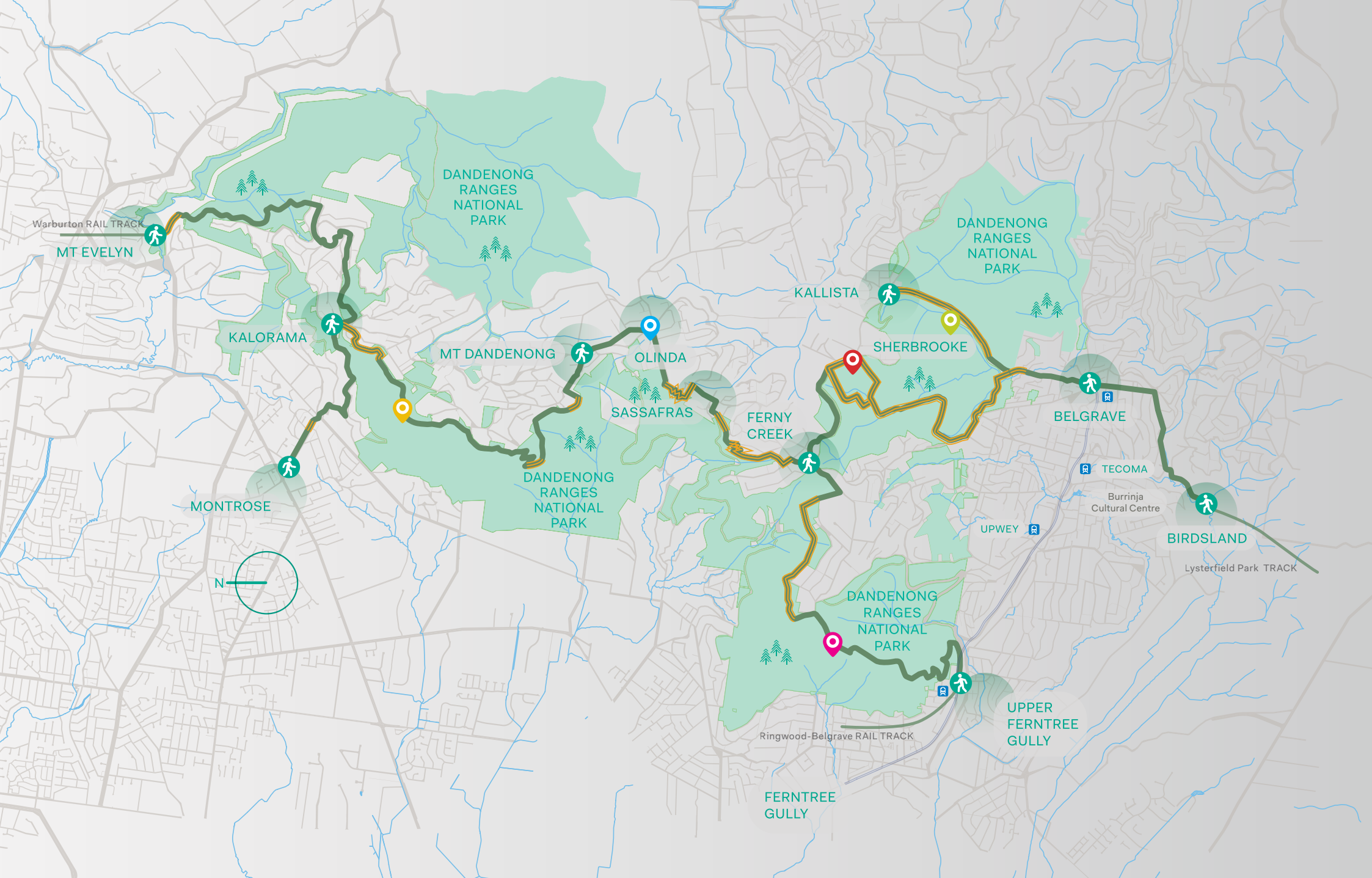
The RidgeWalk track was established through extensive community consultation and rigorous site evaluation. User experience, local connectivity, minimal environmental impact and proximity to parking infrastructure and public transportation were strongly considered.

With 14 kilometers of new and upgraded tracks, RidgeWalk leads visitors through stunning natural sites. At the same time, it provides insight into the cultural heritage of the region and prompt reflection upon human connection with the natural world. It offers a contemporary exploration of art, landscape and Indigenous ways of knowing.

The track is carefully aligned to provide a varied experience. Visitors enjoy views of the Melbourne skyline through the treetops, are immersed in the ecosystem of the forest floor and encounter vibrant communities, towns and villages.

-  RidgeWalk entry and exit points
-  Existing tracks
-  New tracks and significant upgrades
-  Connecting rail walking tracks
-  Nodes

LILYDALE



Warburton RAIL TRACK

MT EVELYN

KALORAMA

MONTROSE

N

DANDENONG
RANGES
NATIONAL
PARK

MT DANDENONG

OLINDA

SASSAFRAS

DANDENONG
RANGES
NATIONAL
PARK

FERNY
CREEK

KALLISTA

SHERBROOKE

DANDENONG
RANGES
NATIONAL
PARK

BELGRAVE

TECOMA

Burrinja
Cultural Centre

BIRDSLAND

Lysterfield Park TRACK

DANDENONG
RANGES
NATIONAL
PARK

UPPER
FERNTREE
GULLY

Ringwood-Belgrave RAIL TRACK

FERNTREE
GULLY

Parking Transport Amenities


The RidgeWalk track has been established to align with existing rail lines, bus routes, underutilised parking locations and existing amenities.


Parking and transport are a key component of the infrastructure required to support the project. While RidgeWalk increases visitor numbers to the region, it also decreases the reliance on cars to move between townships, redistributes the existing parking demand and encourages the use of public transport.


There are approximately 17 car parks connected to RidgeWalk, with a combined capacity exceeding 1200 car spaces, including accessible parking at several locations. A further 84 new parking spaces are established through proposed expansions or reconfigurations.


Bus routes and rail lines provide access to every segment of RidgeWalk, making entry possible from the Melbourne metropolitan transportation system. Current bus stops are well-located and close to sections of RidgeWalk. Some bus stops will be marked in key places along RidgeWalk to ensure the experience connects with the public transport network.


In addition to the car parks on this map, parking is available in and around townships and at other locations across the region.


 RidgeWalk entry and exit points


 Walking track


 Connecting rail walking tracks


 Parking


 Bus 688


 Bus 694


 Bus 663


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 696


 697


 699


 Rail





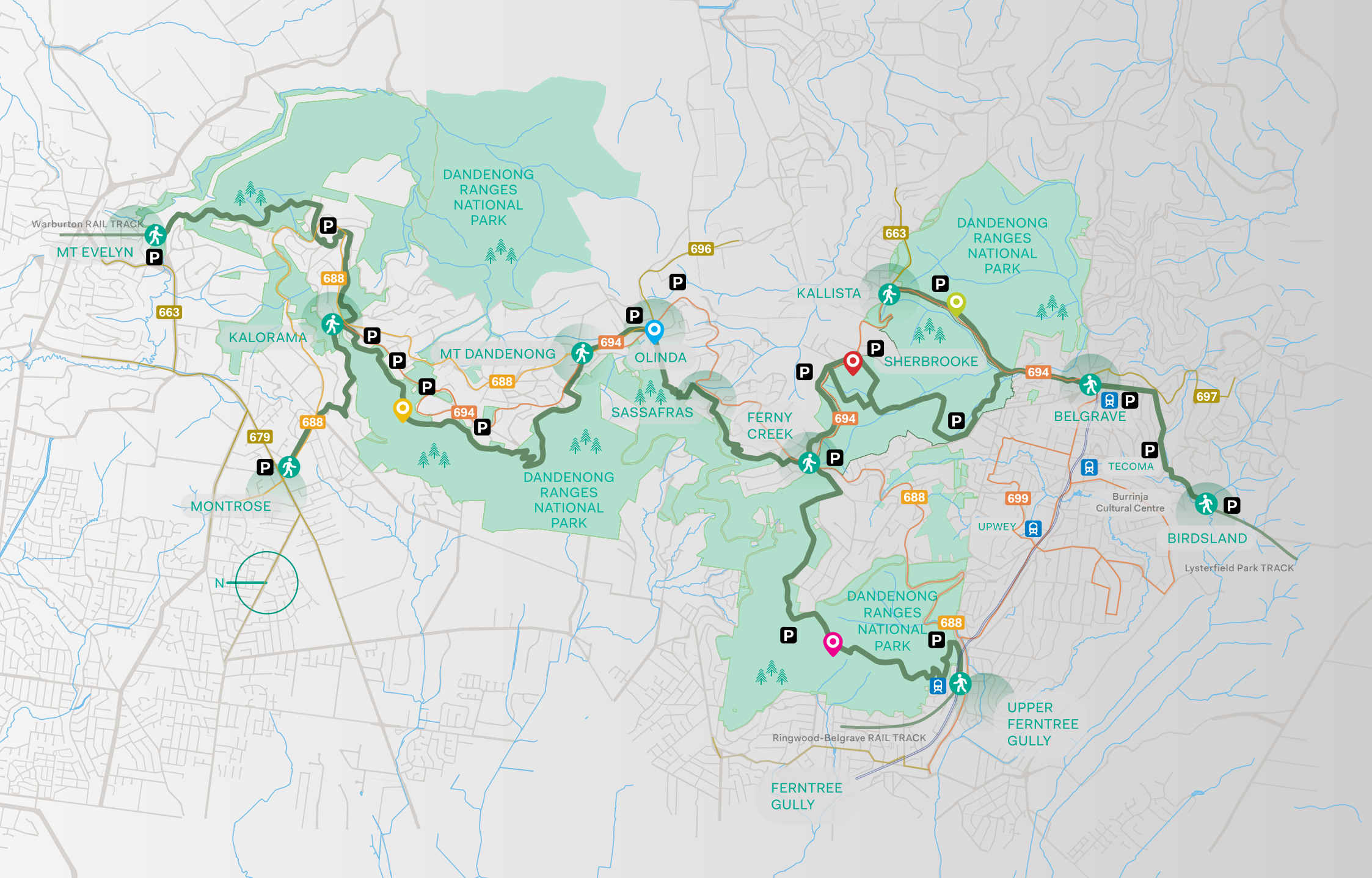






Nodes

LILYDALE




Access & Inclusion


RidgeWalk is for everybody. From the track to artwork and interpretation, RidgeWalk engages directly with access and inclusion.


Multi-sensory artworks are a regular part of the creative program and interpretive materials are made available in a variety of formats.


Sections of RidgeWalk are physically accessible to people with disabilities. These sections are featured on maps and way-finding signage to inform visitors of track conditions.


To ensure all visitors enjoy the rich cultural experience of RidgeWalk, strong consideration is made to accessibility in locating artistic and interpretation sites.


 RidgeWalk entry and exit points


 Walking track


 Assisted wheelchair accessible


 Accessible parking


 Accessible toilets


 Bus 688


 Bus 694


 Bus 663 679 696 697 699


 Rail

 Nodes

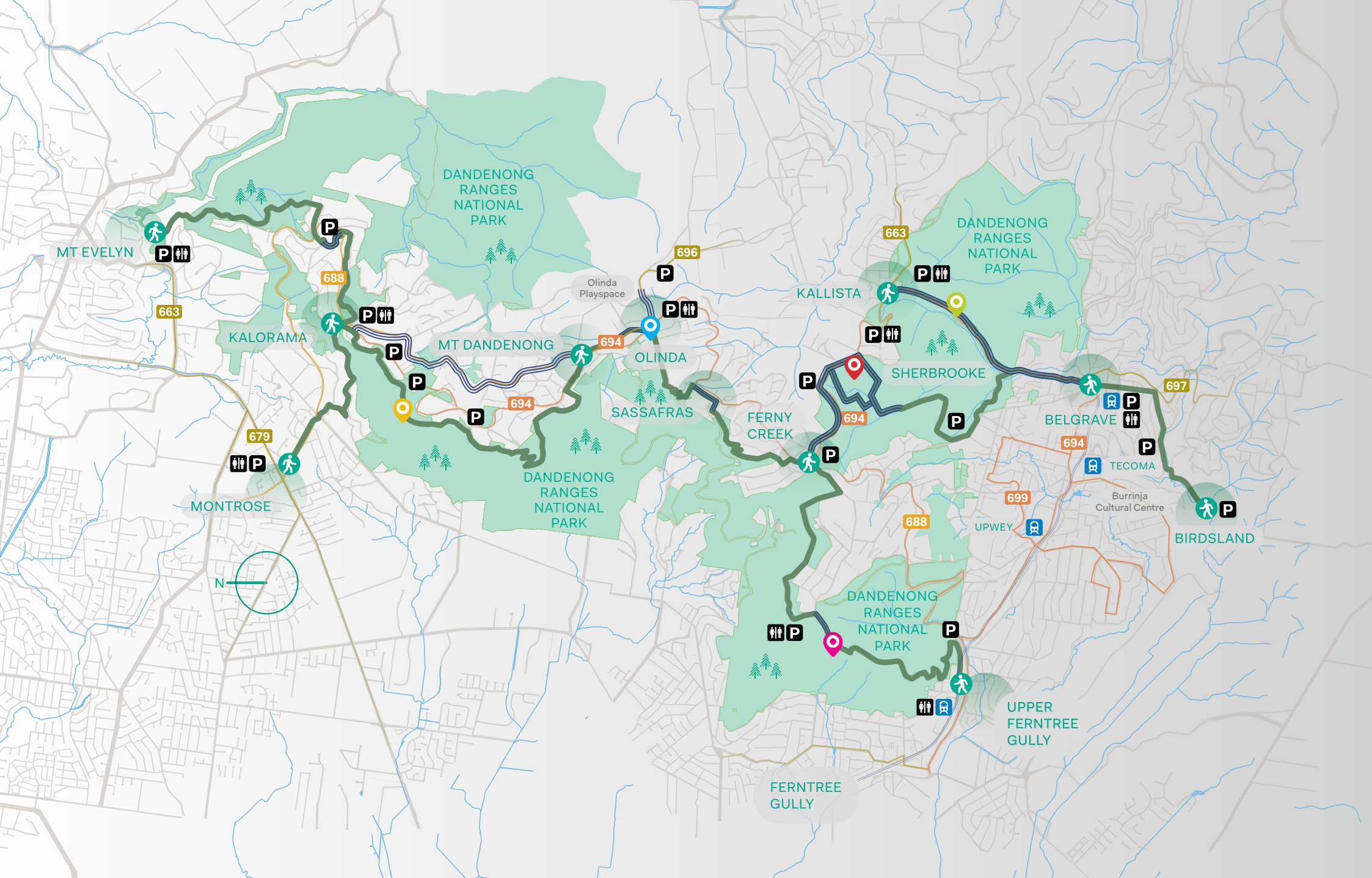
 Nodes

 Nodes

 Nodes

 Nodes

LILYDALE



MT EVELYN

KALORAMA

MONTROSE

DANDENONG
RANGES
NATIONAL
PARK

MT DANDENONG

DANDENONG
RANGES
NATIONAL
PARK

Olinda
Playspace

SASSAFRAS

FERNY
CREEK

FERNTREE
GULLY

DANDENONG
RANGES
NATIONAL
PARK

KALLISTA

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UPPER
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DANDENONG
RANGES
NATIONAL
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BELGRAVE

Burrinja
Cultural Centre

BIRDSLAND



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Acknowledgment

RidgeWalk has been developed in partnership with Parks Victoria and our local community. Funding for the project has been provided by the Australian Government, Victorian State Government and Yarra Ranges Council.

Local Residents, government agencies, consultants, community groups and organisations have contributed to the shaping of the RidgeWalk.

Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, Boon Wurrung Foundation, Urban Initiatives & Arterial Design (Master Plan) Bronwyn Hannah History & Heritage (RidgeWalk Cultural Study), Extent Heritage (Aboriginal Cultural Values Report), Wilde & Woollard (Cost Plan), Urban Enterprise (Economic Impact Study, and Business & Service Plan), Mischa Brus Studio, O'Briens Traffic (Traffic, Transport & Movement Study), Country Fire Authority, Department of Transport, Melbourne Water, Department of Sports and Recreation, Yarra Ranges Council's Indigenous Advisory Committee, Yarra Ranges Council's Disability Advisory Committee, Dandenong Ranges Tourism, Burringa Cultural Centre, local History Groups, local Trader Groups, local Environmental Groups, Mt. Evelyn YMCA and CIRE Community School.



